

**Marilyn Stevens****Address:** Box 368

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Marilyn Stevens, a basketweaver from Trego, arrived in Montana in 1979. She recognized that living in a rural environment required inventiveness, tenacity, and an income. However, in her childhood she was taught that a person can do anything. As a small girl, she had a basket made from leaves, and in that special basket she kept her own small treasures. That basket is still with her and probably speaks to the formation of her love of fiber. Using traditional wicker weaving as the basis for her baskets, she is self-taught in both the basket processes as well as in experimenting with dyes to obtain the rich, bright colored materials used in making her work.

**About the Art:**

With her partner in Montana Blue Heron, she has practiced the art of wicker weaving, developing a fine contemporary art form from the traditional wicker weaves. She pursued the work in baskets because she had always wanted a substantial basket, but couldn't afford it. She really wanted to learn how to make a substantial and useable vessel. To do that, she had to learn about structure. Since then the baskets have evolved, becoming less functional and more structural.

Like other folk and traditional artists, Stevens sees learning about her art form as something that happens very naturally and without a formal classroom. Early on in her weaving, she taught her partner and husband how to weave baskets and they have worked together since. She has visited grade school classes in her area, starting the students off by picking willows and then helping each student weave a small basket to take home.

Stevens enjoys demonstrating her skills both in the community and across the nation. She has demonstrated at larger shows such as the Ft Worth Arts Festival, shows at the Lincoln Center in New York City, the Western Design Conference in Jackson, WY, and shows in Columbus, OH; Ann Arbor, MI; Nashville, TN; and Chicago, IL.

**Photography by:** Marti DeAlva and Chris Autio